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Minorities and the Modern Arab World

New Perspectives

Edited by
Laura Robson

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city of Kirkuk, where many Assyrians worked. For Egypt Hiroko Miyokawa investigates how the Coptic community carefully remade a Coptic Christian religious holiday into a national display, thereby declaring Coptic commitment to the Egyptian state and advertising their long-standing participation in Egyptian cultural nationalism. And in North Africa, Samuel Liebhaber argues, the Berber-speaking Touareg made spurious but convenient claims of a Yemenite origin for their non-Arabic languages, thereby claiming a kind of cultural Arabness and rejecting implications of minority or outsider status.

In all these cases, communities newly tagged as "minorities" within these twentieth-century nation-states largely refused to accept their own marginality to a majoritarian political system and national identity. Instead, they declared passionate commitments to broad (and often secular) concepts of Egyptian, Iraqi, and Arab nationalism and worked to ensure their own ongoing participation in political projects of national belonging and cultural "authenticity." In these active declarations by Baghdadi Jews, Iraqi Assyrians, Egyptian Copts, and Tunisian Berbers that they fully belonged to their emerging nation-states, we can see resistance to the imposition of the "minority" label as a marker of outsider status and vigorous attempts to reconfigure the political landscape to allow for full participation in emerging national identities across the modern Arab world.

5

When Anticolonialism Meets Antifascism

Modern Jewish Intellectuals in Baghdad

ALINE SCHLAEPFER

In Youssef Chahine's autobiographical masterpiece, *Iskanderija . . . lih?* (1979), a scene takes place during the battle of El Alamein in 1942. It shows Egyptian and British officials attending a play staged by Yahya, a young Christian who wants to become a movie director, in Alexandria. In this metatheatrical and humorous mise en abyme, one can see British drinking tea and chatting, Germans yelling at each other, and Italians eating pizzas and obeying the Germans. Two bedouins sitting in the desert and fed up with too many comings and goings decide to impose a toll on foreigners who wish to pass through their territories. Two Egyptians pass by and try to bargain over the price. Eventually, the two bedouins agree to sell them a half-price ticket. In this set of footage drawn from both archival material and Chahine's memory as a young man, European powers, whether German, Italian, or British, are openly condemned and equally seen as intruders on Egyptian soil. And as trivial as it may look, it prompts the thought that negative responses to Nazism and fascism were not uncommon in the public sphere and naturally coexisted with anti-British and anticolonial discourses.

Israel Gershoni and Amy Singer have argued that voices emanating from individuals or groups of individuals fighting for pluralism, freedom of expression, and democracy have systematically been silenced by the established historiography about the region.[1] According to the narrative this void has produced, the totalitarian nature of power left no room for a counterdiscourse and, more generally, for an open debate in the public

sphere. Accordingly, the radicalization of Arab nationalism that took place in the 1930s was closely associated with Nazi Germany.[2] In a later phase of historiography, however, studies have focused on internal factors leading to the formation of Arab nationalism, such as the conflict in Palestine and the French and British interference into economic and intellectual life.[3] The notion of totalitarianism has consequently been put into perspective and fundamentally challenged. New debates and new preoccupations—in most cases independent of or opposed to Nazi influences—have been unveiled. The new conclusions this historiographical trend has put forward have contributed to the deconstruction of a monolithic vision of political and ideological life in the Middle East and succeeded in showing the complexity of its history. Juan Cole has successfully criticized the "black legend of the Axis in Iraq" by demonstrating the Nazis' overall lack of interest in Arab affairs. Gilbert Achcar has distinguished between Arab actors who were accomplices of Nazism and fascism and those individuals who turned toward Germany and Italy for the sake of an "alliance of convenience." Similarly, Götz Nordbruch has meticulously analyzed the public actors who supported Nazi discourses and those individuals who systematically opposed them, even at times of great turmoil, such as when Syria and Lebanon were ruled by the Vichy regime. While a systematic historical paradigm has not yet been completely defined, Ulrike Freitag and Israel Gershoni have formally expressed the necessity of examining with renewed attention the many and various Arab responses to Nazism and fascism during and after the Second World War, in order to fully restore the intellectual history of the Middle East.[4]

This chapter aims to examine the writings left by Jewish intellectuals in Baghdad with this consideration in mind, for several reasons. First, the Jewish population represented an important part of the urban society. During the late Ottoman period, the Baghdadi Jewish community was the third-biggest community in the empire after Salonika and Istanbul, with a total of 35,000 members in 1882, 35,000 in 1896, and 45,000 to 53,000 between 1908 and 1910. The total population of Baghdad was estimated at 150,000 souls in 1908; the Jews consisted of 35.8 percent of it.[5] A 1910 report sent by the British consul general in Baghdad about the Jewish community stated that a "rich and well-off class, consisting almost

entirely of merchants and bankers,"[6] represented 5 percent of the Baghdadi Jewish population, while 30 percent composed the middle class, 60 percent were poor, and 5 percent were beggars. The rapid increase of the Jewish population in Baghdad throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century left its marks on the urban landscape. While the Jewish population was originally centered around the old Baghdad (Taht al-Takiyya, Qanbar 'Ali), they started to move southeast toward the Christian quarters in the 1900s, to the latter's great annoyance.[7] Later (in the late 1920s), the more affluent of the community settled in the new residential quarter of Battawiyyin, outside the Eastern Gate (Bab al-sharqi). As a result of this demographic growth, a substantial Jewish middle class quickly developed and flourished in Baghdad, and so did its modern intellectuals (*muthaqqafun*), more politically active and vocal on political issues than their traditional counterparts (*udaba'*).[8]

Second, Jews—as a non-Muslim community under the rule of a Muslim leadership—were particularly keen to express themselves on the importance of pluralism and rejection of totalitarianism. Also, alarmed by the growing threat of anti-Semitism in Europe, Iraqi Jews were deeply concerned by the consequences of a possible rapprochement between Iraq and Germany. They accordingly became very vocal in the public sphere, as we are about to see.

Third, and most decisively, Baghdadi Jewish *muthaqqafun* were fully immersed in local debates on models of society. Geopolitically speaking, Iraq was rather distant from European influences compared to the Mediterranean Levant, and so were its Jews. In addition, Jews from Arab lands did not benefit from the same attention paid by the European powers to Christian communities, because they did not share the same religion. When the Ottoman self-governing system of millets collapsed, Iraqi Jews progressively lost their social, financial, political, and religious inner structures, as Peter Sluglett demonstrates in his contribution to this volume. And unlike the Jews in Algeria, for instance, their hope for obtaining a European nationality vanished as early as 1918.[9] They did not benefit from the protection of Ashkenazi Jews or local Christians, either, as was the case in Lebanon.[10] And even though some middle-class educated Iraqi Jews knew French or English as a second language, in most cases they

mastered Arabic only. In the lower classes, Iraqi Jews who were sent to schools went to governmental ones, where they were taught only Arabic. In other words, notwithstanding their fragile link with Europe and any other protective entity—or rather because of it—Iraqi Jewish intellectuals had to develop strategies in order to define a place of their own in society. The social, political, and professional networks established with Iraqi journalists and writers played a role of major importance in this regard. Many Iraqi Jewish journalists and writers became acquainted with a group of young Iraqis, claiming to be "liberal intellectuals (*muthaqqafun*) and progressive (*taqaddumiyyun*) democrats (*dimuqratiyyun*),"[11] who founded the Ahali Group in 1932. Because Iraqi Jewish intellectuals had similar views on the models of society they wished to live in, they could relate to their ideologies. In addition, the group attracted the interest of Jewish intellectuals because of its "nebulousness" around certain issues in relation to the Iraqi Left.[12] For instance, they did not agree on the idea of revolution leading to a proletariat dictatorship.[13] Though fiercely opposed to "intellectual conformism," notes Hanna Batatu, the Ahali Group wished to keep a certain flexibility regarding its members' political orientation.[14] Similarly, Jama'at al-Ahali represented a coalition of individuals committed to a broadly defined, democratically oriented political platform of what they denoted as *al-sha'biyya*, or popularism.[15] Many Jews did not wish to jeopardize their security by adhering to controversial political views and consequently joined the Ahali Group. It can therefore be said that Iraqi Jews were profoundly imbued with debates on Iraqi and Arab political issues and expressed themselves accordingly in the public sphere.

Like other non-Muslim communities, Iraqi Jews were deeply affected by the process of minoritization undergone in the Arab Middle East after the establishment of the mandate system, which Laura Robson identifies in her introduction to the present volume. However, throughout the mandate period, Jews tended to view themselves not as a minority (*aqalliyya*) but rather as a community (*ta'ifa*)—a concept they inherited from the nineteenth-century Ottoman system, where *millet* and *ta'ifa* were used interchangeably.[16] In the Iraq constitution of 1925, both terms (*aqalliyya* and *ta'ifa*) are used. But in the chapter concerning the judicature—where

the remnant of the millet system is clearly identifiable[17]—only *ta'ifa* appears. Similarly, according to the "Law for the Israelite Community No. 77" enacted by the Iraqi government in 1932, Jews are officially referred to as a *ta'ifa (isra'iliyya)*, and the word *aqalliyya* is never used.[18] Besides, since the formation of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1921, linguistic nationalism was intensively promoted by the government in general and by the director general of education Sati' al-Husri in particular. The fact that Iraqi Jews—as Arabic speakers—did not constitute a separate ethnolinguistic community in Iraq actually facilitated their self-representation as a natural part of the Iraqi Arab nation. Finally, unlike some ethnolinguistic minorities in Iraq who had been victims of forced displacements and massacres (as was the case of Assyrians), Iraqi Jews developed a strong territorial patriotism throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Unsurprisingly, then, Iraqi Jews strongly opposed the process of minoritization whose target they became under British rule.

As a result of this process, they were often perceived as allies of the British and therefore looked at suspiciously by public opinion, as anti-British sentiment grew rapidly from the late 1920s. In order to counter this direct effect of minoritization, Iraqi Jews needed a place to be visible. In the words of Habermas on the Greek self-interpretation of the polis, "Only in the light of the public sphere did that which existed become revealed, did everything become visible to all."[19] The public sphere consequently became the only "legal-social realm where modern political subjectivities . . . negotiate rights and obligations."[20] In other words, presence meant existence. The press and proliferation of public ceremonies thus became privileged media for Iraqi Jews to express their full loyalty to the country and their absolute indispensability to the survival of Iraqi society.

By scrutinizing Jewish intellectuals' positions on Western powers after independence (1932), I will ask how—in a similar vein to Chahine's young progressive intellectuals who fought against all colonial powers, whether German, Italian, or British—Iraqi Jews condemned European policies in the Middle East. My argument is twofold. First, they naturally adopted an anti-British discourse, in order to dissociate themselves from the colonial enterprise. Second, with regards to the issue of fascism and Nazism, Jews contributed substantially to public arguments against totalitarianism.

In an early phase of their history of public visibility, Iraqi Jews found praise of King Faysal I of Iraq the best way to express their will to belong. They frequently organized shows and plays in honor of the monarch, in the presence of the Jewish community's officials and public figures. These ceremonies organized by the Jewish community found a positive echo in the Iraqi press (Jewish and non-Jewish). For instance, *al-'Alam al-'arabi*, though well known for its nationalistic and at times anti-Jewish positions, often reported on those ceremonies and wrote in praise of their organizers. These reports were later reproduced by Jewish journals, such as *al-Misbah*, a weekly founded by Baghdadi Jews in 1924.[21] However, in 1929, Iraq experienced a major crisis in domestic and foreign politics. British high commissioner Sir Gilbert Clayton (1875–1929), initially known to be well disposed toward Iraqis' aspirations for independence, died of a heart attack in September. During the same year, negotiations began between the British and the Iraqis, leading to the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in June 1930. Finally, the newly appointed prime minister, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, committed suicide in November 1929. All three factors led to a feeling of general dissatisfaction among journalists and intellectuals, as hopes of seeing Iraq become an independent member of the League of Nations temporarily seemed to vanish.[22] As a result, toward the end of the 1920s, the heroic Anglo-Hashemite coalition that led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq had known—and lost—its hour of glory in literary and journalistic motifs. Iraqi *muthaqqafun* started to firmly express themselves against the mandate. The Jews' expression of national attachment also took that direction. Only allusive at its beginnings, the anticolonial discourse soon accused the British of being responsible for al-Sa'dun's death, a rumor that spread like wildfire.[23] Sha'ul Haddad, a Jewish journalist (1910–2010), commented on the prime minister's death in an article entitled "The Motive for the Suicide." The journalist unmistakably accused the British of being responsible for this tragic event, by pointing to the "English rifle."[24]

Until the mid-1930s, Iraqi *muthaqqafun*'s archenemy and the power they considered to be the most serious threat to the country's autonomy remained Great Britain. The words "colonialism" (*al-isti'mariyya*) and "occupation" (*al-ihtilal*) were used in the press to refer to the will of the British Empire to maintain its grip on power through the economic and political means provided by the mandate. But from the 1930s onward, other European powers appeared as threats too. Some public opinion and political elites started to express admiration toward the military superiority of Germany and Italy, in which they saw a model of authority and society.[25] Iraqi ultranationalists such as Sami Shawkat, a medical doctor and director general of the Ministry of Education, considered that fighting with Germany was the right political move in order for Iraq to gain economic and military independence from the British. Lost in a biased syllogism on coalition whereby the enemy of one's enemy is one's friend, they hoped the Germans would be a powerful ally against the British. In 1933 Shawkat gave a speech entitled "Profession of Death" in which he exhorted young students and soldiers to be prepared to die for the nation. He took the example of successful national struggles, such as the armies of Mustafa Kemal, the Pahlavis, and Mussolini:

> If Mustafa Kemal did not have 40000 officers well-trained to the profession of death in order to lead the revolution in Anatolia, we would not have seen Turkey restore the glory of Yavuz Sultan in the 20th century. If Pahlavi did not have thousands of officers ready for the sacred profession, we would not have seen him restore the glory of Darius. If Mussolini did not have tens of thousands of Blackshirts well-trained to the profession of death, he would not have been able to restore the crown of Rome's first Caesars, in the name of Victor Emmanuel's Temple.[26]

However, notwithstanding the undeniable sympathy toward Nazi and fascist models of society within certain circles, Shawkat's speech, as well as other political essays published under the title *These Are Our Goals* in 1939, caused a mass controversy among public figures in Iraq. Sati' al-Husri, former director general of education and ideologue of Arab nationalism, fiercely condemned Shawkat's "blind fervor." In his memoirs, he repeatedly expresses his "disappointment," "sincere regret," and deep "embarrassment" vis-à-vis Sami Shawkat, as both the minister of education and an essayist, as early as 1931.[27] More generally, voices emanating from milieus that historians have long portrayed as radical nationalists but who actually opposed pro-Nazi tendencies were not uncommon, as Orit Bashkin has shown.[28]

Indeed, Kamil al-Chadirchi, early follower of the Ahali Group and chief editor of its mouthpiece, *Sawt al-Ahali*, expressed his concern regarding Shawkat's words. For him, Mussolini was the cause of "the biggest catastrophe History has ever known," referring to the Holocaust. Accordingly, he considered any historical narrative in which the Italian leader played the role of an ideal national leader to be very dangerous for his country. In an article titled "The Iraqi Mosley," published in *Sawt al-Ahali* on January 2, 1946, al-Chadirchi explicitly associated Sami Shawkat with fascism. He compared the medical doctor to the founder of the British Union of Fascists in 1932, Sir Oswald Mosley (1896–1980).[29] When Shawkat fought back by accusing the "leftists (*al-yasariyyin*) of being hostile to Arab nationalism" in *al-Zaman* on January 8–9, 1946, al-Chadirchi replied in a series of editorials titled "The Rise of Fascism in Iraq,"[30] published every day in *Sawt al-Ahali* for several weeks. These editorials were eventually compiled and published under the title *Rise of Fascism in Iraq* by the printing house Maktabat Baghdad the same year and advertised in the Ahali Group's mouthpiece.[31] Among the acerbic accusations al-Chadirchi addressed to Sami Shawkat and other sympathizers of fascism were their imperialistic ambitions. As Gershoni and Freitag have pointed out, for those supporting social democracy, the "new aggressive expansionism and oppressive imperialism [of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy] was much worse than the old imperialism of Britain and France."[32] In the first editorial of *Sawt al-Ahali* in July 1942, al-Chadirchi posed the journal's editorial line: "The journal aims to explain to the Iraqi public opinion the damages fascism causes financially, morally and culturally. It aims to clarify why German occupation (*al-ihtilal*) is a threat to Arab countries and to Iraq."[33] *Sawt al-Ahali* also stressed the fact that the Italians glorified imperialism, while the democrats rejected it: "Italian fascism, for instance, glorifies the Roman Empire and thinks that it is possible to restore it. . . . But are the need to control other nations . . . and fascist mentality a sane thinking?" Al-Chadirchi continued on Sami Shawkat's vision of colonialism: "It is clear from [Shawkat's book *The Arab Empire*] that the doctor supports the colonial (*al-isti'mari*) principle, as he demands the Arab countries apply colonialism (*al-isti'mariyya*)." For al-Chadirchi and other members of the editorial board, however, "the Arab nation needs liberation and unification, not

hostility toward other peoples and colonialism."[34] Iraq's memory of the struggle against colonial Great Britain was fresh and its citizens' bitterness deep. In such a climate, to openly associate one's ideological enemies with imperialism was the best way to disqualify and dishonor them. In these instances, the two words originally used to refer to colonial Great Britain (*al-ihtilal* and *al-isti'mar*) were applied to the German and Italian cases. By using this semantic shift and associating the fascists or anyone openly sympathizing with them with the inexcusable sin of colonialism, Ahali journalists could more easily rule them out of the political debate in the eyes of public opinion.

In this context, it comes as no surprise that Jewish intellectuals declared themselves against Nazi and fascist models of society in the same terms. The weekly *al-Hasid*, literally "The Harvester," a journal that promoted equality (*al-musawat*), justice (*al-'adala*), democracy (*al-dimuqratiyya*), freedom (*al-hurriyya*), and progress (*al-taqaddum*),[35] was founded in Baghdad in 1929 by a group of young intellectuals of Jewish origin. They openly opposed Nazi and fascist influences on society, and toward the end of the 1930s not a week went by without references to the threats of the Axis powers and political developments related to them: "If the literary press wishes to encourage human principles . . . such as freedom and democracy . . . is it possible to do so without condemning unjust systems like fascism and Nazism?"[36]

In a similar vein to the Ahali Group, Jewish intellectuals perfected a discursive strategy whereby behind the usual anti-British discourse would hide an anti-Nazi or antifascist argument, knowing the readership's support for the anticolonial struggle. The strategy was twofold. First, European policies were systematically deconstructed and equally scrutinized. In a special issue that came out in April 1936, Sati' al-Husri was invited to express his views on the situation in Europe. In the article, he compared the European nations to a caravan lost in the desert and divided into several parts. After a long sleep, the traveler, that is, the embodiment of Iraq and other Middle Eastern nations, does not know where to look, which direction to take, or which part of the caravan to follow. The mission of the "thought leaders" (*qadat al-fikr*), he argued, is to redirect the "Oriental nations" and to make them stop repeating "We should imitate the West."

Here, al-Husri invited the reader to put distance between himself and a Europe that no longer offers reliable support to Iraq. In an article echoing one by al-Husri in the same issue of *al-Hasid*, Anwar Sha'ul, an Iraqi Jewish journalist, poet, and chief editor of *al-Hasid* (1904–84), reasserted the role of the "thought leaders" (*qadat al-fikr*) by examining British and French policies vis-à-vis Germany after the First World War. Without naming them, he accused the British of enhancing German humiliation through endless and useless "post-war conferences, treaties, and agreements": "Certain states have become aggressive, others powerless. Certain states have become richer, others have become poorer. . . . Gradually, oppositions against unjust peace treaties have been voiced. Certain states came out of the war whispering: 'Revenge will come!'"[37] The journalist's barely disguised allusion to Nazi Germany reveals his deep concern. And understandably so, as by the time this issue of *al-Hasid* was published in April 1936, the Nuremberg Laws had been introduced and Hitler had just remilitarized the Rheinland, thus ending the Locarno Agreements signed in 1925. Interestingly, though, while he clearly attempted to raise his readers' awareness to the ever-growing threat of Nazism, he subtly played the English guilt card. In his attempt to warn the people of Iraq against a possible German threat, he assumed that anti-British bait would successfully win his readership's sympathy.

The other facet of the discursive strategy—and likely the most effective one—was to associate German and Italian powers with the colonization project in order to discredit them, as *Sawt al-Ahali* did. Jewish journalists attempted to demonstrate that Germany and Italy were no less colonial than the British or the French and therefore also represented a threat to the country's independence. They took every opportunity to unveil the true intentions of colonial Germany and the state's machinations to nourish hatred. They stressed German colonial revisionism, which began during the Weimar Republic after the Treaty of Versailles, when Germany was deprived of its colonies, but was more generally popularized during the Third Reich. Numerous associations for promoting the "colonial idea," under the aegis of the Koloniale Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft (Colonial Empire Association), were founded.[38] The famous *Deutsche Afrika Schau* (German Africa Show), for instance, was a traveling exhibition in which

African actors staged scenes from folklore and everyday life while propagandizing for the benefits of German colonization. These discourses were backed up with the concept of *koloniale Schuldlüge* (lies of colonial guilt), which was part of the broader narrative of German humiliation stirred up by the French and the British.[39] On November 4, 1937, *al-Hasid* reported on the following from the German press: "'We want our colonies back.' . . . 'The German will not be satisfied before the Reich gets its colonies back.' . . . 'If the Reich does not get its colonies back, Europe is condemned to a tragic end.' In other words, Europe is menaced by war if it does not give Germany its colonies back."[40]

'Ezra Haddad, a Jewish historian, political analyst, and main contributor to *al-Hasid* (1900–1972), addressed the issue of raw material (*al-mawadd al-awwaliyya*) in the European colonies. He insisted on the role played by Germany: "Europe is divided into two opposing groups: . . . In the first one, Germany, which has been deprived from its small colonies in Asia and Africa and islands in the Indian Ocean . . . , and Italy. . . . We can see that the deprived group fearlessly and clearly threatens the world and denounces an unjust distribution of colonies. This German Goebbels says: 'We are a poor nation. We have been deprived of our colonies and raw material. We declare to the nations of the world that time has come for us to ask for our colonies back.'" In the case of Italian imperialism, the strategy of discredit was similar. But the argument carried more weight, as Italians did have a history of colonialism in the Arab world (Libya) that offered an example to which an Arabic public could relate. They also had a very recent one in Africa, as Italy occupied Abyssinia in 1936. In an article entitled "Fascism" and signed by an anonymous "democrat," the author stated the following: "Mussolini declares that 'fascism considers the colonial expansion (colonialism) as the true expression of imperialism.' . . . So what did fascism bring to the world? It gave the most horrible example of colonisation. It has tortured, exterminated and deprived its people from their freedom. It has expelled and executed its loyal leaders."[41]

Similarly to the Nazis, fascist rhetoric also developed a discourse on the necessity of colonialism in order to fully accomplish the fascist mission. Modernity would offer local populations in Africa the means to overcome backwardness and chaos and bring true civilization to them.[42]

In response, in 1935 Anwar Sha'ul composed the "Maid of Ethiopia," a poem inspired by the French "Maid of Orléans," Joan of Arc. The poem relates the story of a young woman, the granddaughter of King Menelik, famous for her act of resistance against the Italian troops: "They told her: 'We came to you in order to civilize your people and make it happy.' . . . [She told them]: 'Your words are honey but your actions are poison.' . . . She fought for her beloved nation."[43]

On a formal as well as a narrative level, Sha'ul expresses resistance to Western acculturation and colonialism. The use of the literary genre of the *qasida*—rather than composing short stories (*qisas*), a genre he was much more familiar with until the late 1950s[44]—reveals his will to preserve the structure of traditional Arabic poetry. And his linking of the semantic field of civilization, on the one hand, and war, aggression, and violence, on the other, suggests that the colonial power has evil intentions.

'Ezra Haddad analyzed the factors that led to the formation of the Italian Empire in an article entitled "How Did Italy Build Its Empire? Unveiling the Colonial Machination." He lamented the fact that nobody paid attention to Italy's deadly occupation of Abyssinia: "History has buried its past in the darkness of oblivion and indifference." No one should forget, he wrote, that the Italian Empire had devastated the African country on the pretense of bringing civilization, science, and culture to a people who were victims of their own ignorance and backwardness. But these arguments were nothing but lures, he argued, because behind the civilizational facade, the true goal of the Italians was to subdue and oppress the people of Abyssinia: "It is with sub-machine guns and gas bombs that Italy has brought European culture to Abyssinia." After a detailed analysis of the military conquest of Abyssinia by Emilio de Bono (*Anno XIIII: Conquest of an Empire* [1937]), 'Ezra Haddad eventually asked with consternation: "Do you see, dear reader, how clear were [the Duce's intentions]? Do you understand, now, how colonialism has dealt a mortal blow to the weak and unfortunate nation?" These instances show that the Jews' anticolonial rhetoric functioned as a means to disqualify Nazis and fascists in the eyes of a public possibly in favor of an alliance with Germany against the British. According to this discursive strategy, if the German *colonial guilt* was publicly acknowledged as the British had once been, its candidacy as a new ally for Iraq would easily be disqualified.

Jewish intellectuals' voices joined others in an attempt to create an alternative narrative supporting democracy and rejecting fascism, Nazi totalitarianism, and British colonialism. The Jews made sure that their message would be heard and read by Iraqis outside of the community. *Al-Hasid* was a "political journal" above all, with no sign of Jewish affiliation. The chief editor associated his journalistic enterprise with influential political personalities from the Ahali Group such as Hikmat Sulayman, but also with more nationalistic ones, such as Sati' al-Husri, Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani, Bakr Sidqi, and Yasin al-Hashimi. But the *function* of both anticolonialism and antifascism was different when the Jews were involved. The political situation gave Iraqi Jewish journalists and writers a double incentive to express their opposition to British colonial rule. As Iraqis they claimed independence for their country along with other Iraqis. But as Jews they also needed to reject the process of minoritization in which they were involved and to fight against what the British believed to be a natural alliance with the colonial power. The same went for fascism and Nazism: As Iraqi progressive *muthaqqafun*, they believed that the Nazi regime, perceived as totalitarian by nature, could only harm and destroy their country. But as Jews, they also feared that a German occupation of Iraq would put them in great danger and jeopardize their rights and security.

In conclusion, Iraqi Jews took an active part in the process of remodeling historical and political narratives about Germany and Italy through the press. By doing so, they not only contributed substantially to an alternative public debate on both Nazi and fascist totalitarianism and on the general anticolonial debate, but also gave new meaning to this act of resistance.